

connexion, once observed, with an apologetic but affectionate smile, "The old man is almost too much of a gentleman "

With more than sufficient troubles in his own office—troubles, however, which he never allowed to perturb his serene equanimity or to prevent his spending the week-ends at Passfield Corner—he had little time to devote to the more general tribulations and perplexities of the party and of the Government of which he was a member. He was outside the House of Commons, focus of those perplexities and tabulations, and, especially in the last two years of the Cabinet's life, out of contact with the Prime Minister. Yet so acute and experienced an observer was aware, both of the tides of feeling that were moving the mind of the party, and of what was going on, outside of it* Certain features of the events of August 1931 surprised him and his wife less than they did many others

Mrs Webb's article, already referred to, suggested part of the answer to some of the questions that the simpler souls in the Labour party were finding insoluble and acutely painful. Two months after the National Government had swept the country at a General Election, he wrote a paper in whose opening paragraph he takes the bull by the horns

"Why did Mr Ramsay MacDonald, after thirty years' up-building of the British Labour Party, decide to do his best to smash it, going over with a couple of his principal colleagues and a mere handful of his Party to a Coalition of Conservative and Liberals?"

He not only asks the question He gives the
answer His
diagnosis of the situation as it was during the
opening
months of 1931 is illuminating After setting
out the par-
liamentary awkwardness of a minority
position, with

"The Government dependent every day on the
support of one
01 other of the mveterately hostile Parties for
obtaining the
Closure (granted only to a majority vote)
without which not